

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 10, 2012

The Honorable Patrick Donahoe
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
458 L'Enfant Plaza Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20024-2114

Industry Engagement and Outreach
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Room 4107
Washington, D.C. 20260-4107

RE: Service Standards for Market-Dominant Mail Products

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe:

We write to offer our comments with regard to the United States Postal Service's proposal to reduce service standards for First Class mail delivery. We remain deeply concerned that the consequences of this proposed reduction in service standards for commerce and quality of life in rural America would be devastating.

The impact of reducing these standards will be particularly difficult for our constituents in rural America who depend on fast and reliable service to maintain access to necessary medicines, equipment, correspondence, paychecks and even election ballots. We are particularly disappointed that although the majority of the 4,200 public comments filed in response to the Postal Service's Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking were negative, the current proposal makes no real changes to the rule. Further, many people who commented on the rule expressed concern that the mail would "lose its utility to those who rely upon it most, such as the elderly, those who cannot access the internet, and those who live in rural areas." The new proposed rule does not appear to make any changes to recognize the importance of timely mail delivery in rural areas.

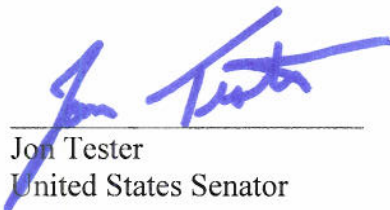
In many parts of rural America, the closure or consolidation of processing facilities would make it virtually impossible to maintain even a three-day turn-around on first class mail, even when it originates and is delivered within the same rural community. One example is the proposal to move mail processing from western Montana to Spokane, Washington, across two treacherous mountain passes and several hundred miles. Such a move would eliminate not only overnight and two-day service in western Montana, but would undoubtedly result in unacceptable further delays in service beyond the three days maximum. Similar examples can be found throughout rural America of how the Postal Service's proposed plan to eliminate overnight service and close hundreds of processing facilities will cripple postal delivery. We urge you to reconsider this flawed proposal and instead seek other avenues of increased revenue and cost-cutting.

Closure of mail processing facilities that serve rural areas and rural post offices will result in the Postal Service's failure to live up to its promise to "provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities." Our constituents in rural America cannot continue to disproportionately bear the brunt of the Postal Service's budget and service-cutting measures.

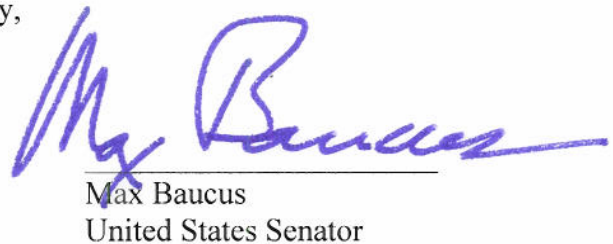
We are aware of the precarious financial position of the Postal Service, and there is broad bipartisan agreement in the Congress that the Postal Service must not be eliminated or privatized. We look forward to the coming debate over how best to strengthen the long-term future of the Postal Service. However, it is imperative that the Postal Service not accidentally destroy itself with its own cost-cutting efforts. We strongly believe that further eroding service delivery standards in rural America will result in exactly that.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and we again urge you to reconsider how this proposed rule will impact the parts of the country that most depend on timely mail delivery.

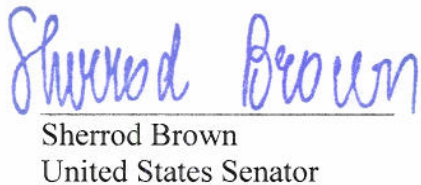
Sincerely,



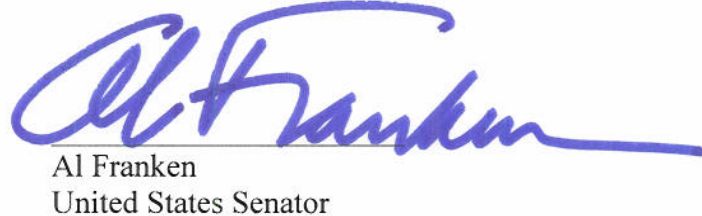
Jon Tester
United States Senator



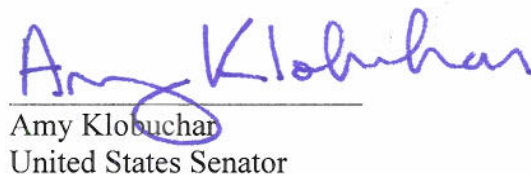
Max Baucus
United States Senator



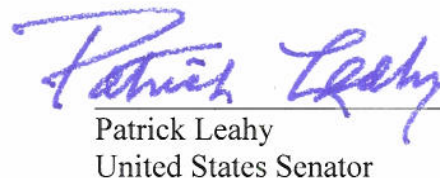
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



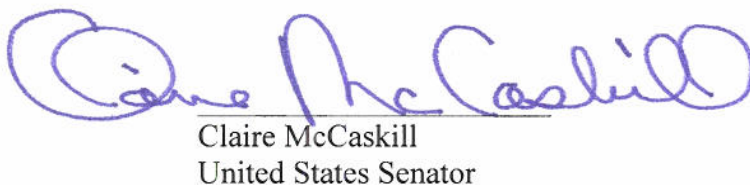
Al Franken
United States Senator



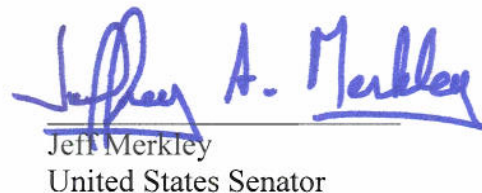
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Mark Pryor

Mark Pryor
United States Senator

Bernie Sanders

Bernie Sanders
United States Senator

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator
